

# Northern Virginia Gang Task Force

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## **Northern Virginia Regional Gang Task Force Presents a Progress Report to the Community**

The Northern Virginia Regional Gang Task Force (NVRGTF), a multi-discipline and multi-jurisdictional partnership to interdict and disrupt gang activity in Northern Virginia, presented a progress report to the community on July 17. The members of the task force include the chief law enforcement executives from each jurisdiction and state and federal law enforcement partners representing enforcement efforts. Court service unit directors and regional intervention coordinators represent prevention/intervention efforts.

“By working together, not only regionally, but with state and federal law enforcement partners, we have made this area inhospitable for gang activity,” said NVRGTF Chairman and Herndon Police Chief Toussaint Summers. “We have let gangs know — you are not welcome in Northern Virginia.”

Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Chairman Gerald E. Connolly told the members of the NVRGTF, “Every kid is worth fighting for to avoid the lure of gang violence. All of us have a role in protecting their future and the safety of our citizens.”

The task force was formed in July 2003 under the leadership of U.S. Rep. Frank Wolf, who brought together leaders from local government, the law enforcement community, schools, prosecutors, courts and others to develop an effective strategy to deal with the area’s rising level of gang activity. Through Wolf’s support, the U.S. Congress has funded the Northern Virginia Regional Gang Task Force since 2003 as part of the U.S. Department of Justice Appropriations Bill.

“The strategy first and foremost recognizes that the solution to gangs is not just a law enforcement issue, but must involve the community as well,” said NVRGTF Co-chairman and Leesburg Police Chief Joseph Price. “Our focus on community solutions that are multi-disciplinary and multi-jurisdictional has made our approach a model for other areas of the country.”

The goals of the Northern Virginia Regional Gang Task Force are based on a model from the U.S. Department of Justice’s Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and encompass a collaborative gang prevention effort focused on enforcement, education and intervention/prevention:

- more -

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- Enforcement — The initial focus of the NVRGTF was to share intelligence while using a coordinated response to gang activity and crimes and providing a common level of enforcement across the region. This multi-jurisdictional approach no longer restricts police response by boundaries. Prosecution is another important element and the NVRGTF coordinates activities with federal and local prosecutors, particularly on the prosecution of serious criminal gang offenders.
- Education — The major focus is to increase public awareness about criminal gang trends and characteristics, what to look for and the dangers of gang involvement. The task force has developed baseline training for all law enforcement and school personnel in the Northern Virginia region so that they can recognize gang activity and take proactive steps to counter it. Outreach projects in English and Spanish include PSAs, training videos, brochures and posters, which have been distributed throughout the community. Other programs include mentoring, after-school programs and summer camps.
- Intervention/prevention — Five regional intervention coordinators provide a point of contact for gang-related intervention programs and plans. They will work in collaboration with the courts, social service agencies, local governments, the schools, community and faith-based organizations, businesses and families to counteract the influence of gangs. The coordinators are:
  - Robert Bermingham, Gang Prevention Coordinator  
Fairfax County
  - Robert Vilchez, Gang Task Force Coordinator  
Arlington County/City of Falls Church
  - Mike Mackey, Gang Prevention and Intervention Coordinator  
City of Alexandria
  - Richard Buchholz, Gang Response Intervention Team Coordinator  
Prince William County, Manassas and Manassas Park
  - Ed Ryan, Gang Response Intervention Team Coordinator  
Loudoun County

The NVRGTF includes membership from the jurisdictions of: Fairfax County; Town of Herndon; Town of Leesburg; Loudoun County; Manassas City; Manassas Park; Prince William County; City of Alexandria; Arlington County; Town of Dumfries; City of Fairfax; City of Falls Church; Town of Vienna; Town of Warrenton and Fauquier County. The task force also includes representatives from: Virginia State Police; Federal Bureau of Investigation; Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms; Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

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